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News Bristol News Coronavirus

Army arrive at Ashton Gate to set up Britain's first mass coronavirus vaccination programme - updates

Army officers were seen on Monday morning

By Tristan Cork Senior Reporter & Estel Farell Roig Senior reporter
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NEWS



Army officers were spotted at Ashton Gate this morning (Monday, November 30) ahead of Bristol's mass coronavirus vaccination programme.

Bristol Live was able to reveal last week the army is to take over part of Ashton Gate Stadium in South Bristol this week to set up a mass coronavirus vaccination programme.

The news came as local NHS chiefs confirmed people in Bristol would start receiving the Covid-19 vaccines in just ten days time, starting with over-50s and frontline health and care workers, local NHS chiefs have confirmed.

The regional centre will be run by the army in the South Stand at the home of Bristol City and Bristol Bears in BS3, with tens of thousands of people expected to be vaccinated against the virus every week.

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16:29 TRISTAN CORK

Ashton Gate raised at Number 10

The presence of the army at Bristol's largest venue to begin preparation for a mass coronavirus vaccine programme was put to Number 10 Downing Street today.

14:16 TRISTAN CORK

Mayor of Bristol talks about Ashton Gate vaccine programme

The mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees, appeared on BBC1's national lunchtime politics flagship programme Politics Live just now, and they asked him about the work going on at Ashton Gate.

He said: "The aim is that we are ready for anything that comes along that allows us to work for the safety of our population, so we will make sure that everything that we've got is in place."

He also talked a lot, and challenged, the Conservative MP Tobias Ellwood, about a £2.8m a month shortfall in Government cash - the difference between what Bristol needs to support its affected businesses in Tier 3, and what the Government is providing.

He also talked about long-term funding and investment in building community resilience.

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Bristol's coronavirus Tier 3 borders - the lines you can't cross from Wednesday

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The Tier 3 lines you're not allowed to cross from Wednesday

Army to take over Ashton Gate for mass coronavirus vaccination programme

Fury as huge phone mast is erected without planning permission

Bristol mayor Marvin Rees during a Facebook Live on November 4 (Image: Facebook/Marvin Rees)

12:25 ESTEL FARELL ROIG

NHS England's response

We have just received a response from NHS England, which says they are not in a position to confirm details as there is no confirmed vaccine or timeframes.

12:01 TRISTAN CORK

What the army say

Need to know basis, old chum. It's no surprise that a spokesperson for the Ministry of Defence has directed our inquiry to NHS England, who we are waiting to hear from.
If you want to know what the NHS is telling itself at board level, **check out our story detailing the mass coronavirus vaccination plan for the Bristol area, here**.

11:59 TRISTAN CORK

Testing site continues

Since April, the car park at Ashton Gate Stadium has hosted a mobile coronavirus testing centre - it's been for staff who work for the UHBW hospitals trust, and been a drive-through test centre.
For long periods, it was not that much used, but has been busy over the last month or so, and still is today, as this picture from there just now shows, as the army and NHS staff continue to prepare inside the stadium for the vaccination programme.

A nurse administers a covid test at Ashton Gate Stadium in Bristol (Image: BristolLive)

11:52 TRISTAN CORK

What Ashton Gate Stadium say

Bosses at Ashton Gate have not revealed much about what's going on, but Stadium

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Only four areas with high Covid rates as new cases drop by half

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chief exec Mark Kelly did tweet out a little message to say they were ready.
You can **read the full story about Ashton Gate's involvement in this, here**.

11:49 TRISTAN CORK

What Bristol City Council say

Not much, but to be fair to them, it isn't their programme.
A council spokesperson has confirmed that it's being run by the NHS nationally, through health trusts locally.
"Bristol City Council is providing advice and guidance and will help communicate the detail of the programme when ready."
On Friday, when we Bristol Live broke the story that this was happening at Ashton Gate, we asked the local health trusts and the Government for more details, and again this morning, but are still waiting to hear back.
You can read what details we have got - and it is pretty comprehensive - here.

11:42 TRISTAN CORK

Setting up has begun

This is the latest from Ashton Gate this morning, where a small number of soldiers have begun working with NHS staff to begin the mammoth task of converting part of Ashton Gate into a mass coronavirus vaccination centre.

Covid immunity passports are being looked at

Troops were present at Ashton Gate in Bristol on Monday morning as preparation begins to roll out a covid vaccine at the stadium (Image: BristolLive)

11:36 ESTEL FARELL ROIG

Another vaccination centre in the area

Cheltenham Racecourse could be used as a mass coronavirus vaccination centre for Gloucestershire.

The Jockey Club, which owns the **course**, confirmed to the LDRS it is "working with the NHS on this" to help set up a vaccination programme for local residents.

It has not been confirmed whether the racecourse will be used as a mass **covid** vaccination centre, or if only part of it will.

You can read the full story **here**.

10:04 TRISTAN CORK

How many people will be vaccinated?

The numbers are pretty impressive. According to the NHS experts, between 75,000 and 110,000 people in the city, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire will receive

vaccines every week from Monday, December 7, until April 5,
Everyone will get two jabs, but that could be 935,000 people.
The full story on what the NHS bosses said about this, is here

09:47 ESTEL FARELL ROIG

Rapid coronavirus testing

Rapid coronavirus **testing is to be rolled out more widely in Bristol**, with repeat testing for specific groups planned and the possibility that the army will be called in to help. The rapid 'lateral flow antigen' tests, which can return results within a matter of minutes, are used to detect whether people without any symptoms are in fact carrying the virus.

The rapid tests are already used in the NHS to check if patient-facing staff are infected, and were deployed in a successful pilot in Liverpool to help it out of tier 3 and into tier 2. They will also be used in a **free testing programme for university students** so they can safely head home for Christmas.

Now the rapid tests are on their way to parts of the wider population, probably for people in high risk occupations such as supermarket workers and bus drivers.

09:22 ESTEL FARELL ROIG

The latest coronavirus figures for Bristol

In the past week, the number of new coronavirus cases in Bristol has been falling.

The latest figures from the Government show **there were five more deaths** from coronavirus recorded in the last 24 hours in the Bristol area - but numbers of new cases and the all-important 'case rate' is falling more quickly now.

A total of 83 people in Bristol tested positive for coronavirus on Sunday, November 29. That brings the total number in Bristol to 15,184 since the start of the pandemic.

Only **four areas of Bristol remain with rates of coronavirus** in the highest level of the Government's statistics - indicating just how much numbers of new cases have dropped off in the city during the month-long lockdown.

08:44 TRISTAN CORK

What's happening at the stadium right now?

The army arrive at Ashton Gate Stadium in Bristol to set up Britain's first mass coronavirus vaccination programme (Image: Bristol Live)

The very first contingent of army logistics officers have arrived at Ashton Gate Stadium this morning.
They have opened up the South Stand concourse - the part nearest the biggest car park and main road entrance to Ashton Gate (next to the South Bristol Retail Park), where they will begin the task of converting it to a mass vaccination centre.

08:40 TRISTAN CORK

What is the army's involvement?

The vaccination trial is to be administered, we understand, by the North Bristol NHS Trust - the trust which runs Southmead Hospital, among others.
But the logistics of getting thousands of people into and out of Bristol's biggest venue will be huge - and that's where the army come in.
Details of whether army medics will be assisting NHS staff to actually administer the vaccines have not been revealed yet.

08:38 TRISTAN CORK

What about this vaccine?

As it stands today, no coronavirus vaccine has been approved for use in the UK, however, it is anticipated that at least one of the two leading the way - the Pfizer vaccine and/or the Oxford vaccine, will be approved this week.
At a board meeting on Friday, the chief executive of the University Hospitals Trust in Bristol, Robert Woolley, said: "Things are moving very fast"
Bristol Live understands that, subject to approval, vaccinations could start as early as next Monday.

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